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HOME EDUCATION.

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# HOME EDUCATION:

A COURSE OF LECTURES TO LADIES,

DELIVERED IN

BRADFORD, IN THE WINTER OF 1885-1886.

BY

CHARLOTTE M. MASON,

*2. 2. 2.*

SOMETIME LECTURER ON EDUCATION AND TEACHER OF HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY AT THE  
BISHOP OTTER COLLEGE, CHICHESTER.

*Life and times*

LONDON:

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1886.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

In proposing these lectures, my original notion was to popularize and amplify the valuable educational hints contained in some two or three chapters of Dr. Carpenter's "Mental Physiology;" but the subject is a wide one, and I have found it necessary to cover much ground untouched in that work. A complete or worthy treatment of "Home Education" within the limits of a single small volume is out of the question. My attempt is, to suggest a method of education resting upon a basis of natural law: and to touch, in this connection, upon the mother's duties to her children in the three stages of life during which they fall under her personal training—childhood, school-life, and young maidenhood—I say maidenhood, because the youth is, earlier than the girl, necessarily left to the education of circumstances, and his training falls less within the mother's province.

Let me add, that, in venturing to speak on the subject of Home Education, I do so with the sincerest deference to mothers, believing that, in the words of a wise teacher of men, "the woman receives from the Spirit of God Himself the intuitions into the child's character, the capacity of appreciating its strength and its weakness, the faculty of

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calling forth the one and sustaining the other, in which lies the mystery of education, apart from which all its rules and measures are utterly vain and ineffectual.\* But, just in proportion as a mother has this peculiar insight as regards her own children, she will, I think, feel her need of a knowledge of the general principles of education, founded upon the nature and the needs of all children. And this knowledge of the *science of education*, not the best of mothers will get from above; seeing that we do not often receive as a gift that which we have the means of getting by our own efforts.

Let me add one thing more: in the following lectures, my attempt is, to point out, not what is practicable, but what appears to me absolutely *best* for the child from an educational point of view. In hardly two households would the same plans be practicable; but every mother may strike out a course for herself, including so much of what seems to her "the best" as her circumstances admit of. "What else am I for?" said a wise mother with reference to her duties in the education of her children; but, unhappily, it is not every mother who is free to make the bringing up of her children her *profession*, that is, to give herself up to it seriously, regularly, punctually, as a man does to the business by which he gets his living.

I beg to offer my grateful thanks to William Dobie, Esq., M.D., of Keighley, for the careful and able revision he has given to such parts of this work as rest on a physiological basis.

*in concluding,* May I draw the attention of the reader to the following suggestive remarks, bearing on education, from the pen of a thoughtful writer on psychological subjects?

Manningham. The Rev.

September, 1886. \* J. J. Maurice.

C. R. M.

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"The indisputable fact that education and medicine have hitherto followed their own empirical methods without much regard to the sciences, arises partly from the difference between practice and theory, art and science; and partly from the urgency of practical application, which cannot await the final results of research, and their systematization in abstract principles. The child has to be taught and the patient treated according to the means at hand; tutor and physician must be guided by such light as he has; he cannot wait until science has disentangled from the mass of mingled prejudice, precipitation, ignorance, and knowledge the true laws of mental and bodily life. All this is true. Nevertheless, it is likewise true that both tutor and physician have been guided by the psychological and physiological conceptions current in their time, although supplementing these with empirical observations and traditional prejudices, and following the latter even when they were irreconcilable with the ascertained laws of science. The absurd notions respecting the nature of the mind, its simplicity, autonomy, independence of the organism, and its equality in all men, are clearly recognizable in the current practices of educators; just as, formerly, absurd notions respecting a vital principle, and the nature of the entity named disease, directed medical practice.

"Once recognize that education is an art which has its scientific basis in psychology, and the importance of having a rational and verifiable basis, rather than one that is unverifiable, becomes obvious. In proportion, therefore, as psychology acquires scientific precision its influence on education will become beneficent, and thus also an improved

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physiology will lead to a better art of medicine, without, in either case, removing the difficulties belonging to each practical application of abstract principles. A knowledge of the way in which faculties are evolved, impressions organized, moral and scientific intuitions formed, habits established, and the structure no less than the furniture of the mind receives its individual character from the silent and incessant modifications of experience, will make parents and teachers keenly alive to the incalculable importance of the conditions under which the early years of the child are passed. Whoever has closely studied the evolution of the faculties will see the folly and the wickedness of leaving children to the care of ignorant servants and vulgar companions at a period when impressions are most indelible,—a period when, as we know, the germs of the future character are deposited. If out of the same nursery, the same school-room, and what seems the same environment, children of the same parents are so markedly unlike in disposition, talents, tempers, it has to be considered that the original differences in their organisms give rise, even under the same circumstances, to a difference in an important element—the individual experiences. To gain some glimpse of the way in which intuitions are established and dispositions formed is the first task of parent and teacher.”\*

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THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN  
UNDER NINE YEARS OF AGE.

Indeed this, of the growing boy or girl, is not only an awkward, but a critical stage of life. For the first time the young people are greatly occupied with the notion of their own *rights*: their *duties* are nowhere. Not what they owe, but what is due to them, it is, that oppresses their minds. "It's a shame," "It's not fair," "It's too bad," are muttered in secret, when no one ventures to murmur aloud,—and this, with aggravating unreasonableness, and a "one-sidedness" which grown-up people can hardly understand. But this tiresome behaviour does not arise from any moral twist in the young people; they really have more right than reason on their side: their claims might often be yielded, if there were none but themselves to consider. What they want is, to have their eyes opened that they may see the rights of others as clearly as their own; and their reason cultivated, that they may have power to weigh the one against the other. This aggressiveness is not mere naughtiness. They must be met on their own ground. Care must be taken not to offend their exaggerated sense of justice as to all that affects themselves. They must get the immunities they can fairly claim; and their parents must be at the trouble to convince them, with good humour, when they are clearly in the wrong.

In the mean time the state of feeling must be dealt with which would lead a boy to say, "I shan't," if he dared. He must be reached through his affections: the very feelings which make him offensive when centred upon himself, are beautiful and virtuous when they flow in the channels of justice and benevolence towards others. And this is a change not only possible, but easy and pleasant for parents to bring about. The feelings are there already; the strong sense of justice; and the love, which has become exaggerated self-love

only because the *attention* has been allowed to fix upon self and its claims to the exclusion of others. It rests with the parent to draw the attention from self to other people, and the affections will flow in that direction to which the attention is turned.

For instance, let the young people feel that the *happiness* of home is a trust which every member of it has in charge; that the child who sits down to table with a sullen face destroys for the time the happiness of his whole family, just as a hand's-breadth held close to the eyes will shut out the whole light of the sun. What is it that makes the happiness of every day; great treats, great successes, great delights? No, but constant friendly looks and tones in those about us, their interest and help in our pursuits, their service and pity when we are in difficulty and trouble. No home can be happy if a single member of it allow himself in ugly tempers and behaviour. By degrees, great sensitiveness to the moral atmosphere of the home will be acquired; the happiness of a single day will come to be regarded as a costly vase which any clumsy touch may overthrow. Now, the attention is taken off self and its claims, and fixed upon brother and sister, father and mother, servants and neighbours; so slight a thing as a friendly look can add to the *happiness* of every one of these.

Affection flows naturally towards those to whom we can give happiness. A boy who feels himself of little account in his family will give all his heart to his dog; he is necessary to Puck's happiness at any rate; and, as for the dog,—“I think it is wrong to let children have dogs. It spoils them for mankind,” says the late Lord Lytton. Let the boy have his dog, but let him know, to how many others even a pleasant word from him gives happiness for the moment. Benevolence, the delight in giving happiness, is a stream which swells as it flows. The boy who finds he really can make a difference

to his home, is on the look-out for chances. A hint as to what father or sister would like is not thrown away. Considerate obliging behaviour is no hardship to him when he is not “bothered” into it, but produces it of his own free will. Like begets like. The kindness he shows is returned to him, and, by him, returned again, full measure, pressed down, and running over. He looks, not on his own things, but on the things of others. His love of justice shows in the demand of “fair play” for others now: he will not hear others spoken ill of in their absence, will not assign unworthy motives, or accuse another easily of unworthy conduct; he is just to the conduct, the character, the reputation of others. He puts himself involuntarily in the place of the other, and judges as he would be judged.

“Teach me to feel another's woe,  
To hide the faults I see;  
That mercy I to others show,  
That mercy show to me,”—

is his unformed, unconscious prayer.

His benevolence, again, his kindness, will reach, not only to the distresses of others, but will show itself in forbearance towards tiresome tempers, in magnanimity in the forgiveness of injuries. His habits of kind and friendly behaviour will, by degrees, develop into principles of action; until, at last, his character is established, and he comes to be known as a just and virtuous man. Towards this great result, the parents can do little more than keep the channels open, and direct the streams; draw the attention of their son to the needs and the claims of others, and point out to him from time to time the ways in which he holds the happiness of others in his hands. It is needless to say how a selfish or worldly maxim thrown in—“Take care of yourself,” “Look after your own interests,” “Give tit for tat,”—may obstruct the channel or choke the spring. Does, then, the whole of moral training

resolve itself into the culture of the affections? Even so; it is no new thing to us to learn that—

“As every rainbow hue is light,  
So every grace is love.”

#### 9. Home Training—Religious.

With regard to the training of the young in the religious life, I am chiefly anxious to call your attention to the power and beauty of a holy youth. We are content, in this matter, with too low a standard for the children as for ourselves, looking for less than that which many a beautiful child attains in his degree—a life, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners:”—

“Who aimeth at a star,  
Shoots higher, far,  
Than he who means a tree:”—

(As for the few practical hints I shall venture to offer, they are in this, as in other matters of education, only what thoughtful mothers already carry out.

In the first place, “every word of God” is the food of the spiritual life; and these words come to us most freely in the moments we set apart in which to recollect ourselves, read, say our prayers. Such moments in the lives of young people are apt to be furtive and hurried; it is well to secure for them the necessary leisure—a quiet twenty minutes, say, —and that, early in the evening; for the fag end of the day is not the best time for its most serious affairs. I have known happy results where it is the habit of the young people to retire for a little while, when their wits are fresh, and before the work or play of the evening has begun.

Again, the Christian life should be a *progressive* life. The boy should not be allowed to feel himself like a door on its hinges, always swinging over the same ground. New and

definite aims, thoughts, subjects of prayer, should be set before him week by week, that “something attempted, something done,” may give him courage; and that, suppose he is harassed by failure, he may try in a new direction with new hope. Even those who do not belong to the Church of England would find her Sunday collects, epistles, and gospels helpful, as giving the young people something definite to think about, week by week. We can hardly hope in this life to grow up to all there is in those weekly portions, but the youngest Christian finds enough to go on with, and has the reposing sense of being led, step by step, in his heavenward progress. I am not suggesting this as a substitute for wider reading of the Bible, only as a definite thought, purpose, and prayer for every week as it comes, in addition to whatever other prayers general or special needs may call for. The bringing of the thought of the collect and its accompanying scriptures home will afford occasion for a few earnest words, week by week, not to be readily forgotten. And this in itself is a gain, for we all experience some difficulty in speaking of the best things to the people we live amongst, especially to the young people.

Only one point more—a word as to the manner of keeping Sunday in the family. Do not let the young people feel themselves straitened by narrow views: give them freely the broad principle that what is right on Saturday is right on Sunday—right, but not in all things convenient; the Sunday has pursuits of its own; and we are no more willing to give up any part of it to the grind of the common business or the common pleasures of life, than the schoolboy is to give up a holiday to the grind of school-work. Even for selfish reasons of health and comfort, we cannot afford to give up the repose to body, mind, and spirit which we owe to the change of thought and occupations the day brings.

Having made the principle of Sunday-keeping plain,

make the practice pleasant. Let it be a joyous day—everybody in his best temper and gentlest manners. Put anxious cares aside on Sunday, for the children's sakes; and if there be no "vain deluding mirth," let there be gaiety of heart and talk.

Let the day be full of its own special interests and amusements. An hour's reading aloud, from Sunday to Sunday, of a work of real power or interest, might add to the interest of Sunday afternoon; and this family reading should supply a pleasant *intellectual* stimulus.

A little poetry may well be got in; there is time to digest it on Sunday; not only George Herbert, Vaughan, Keble, but any poet who feeds the heart with wise thoughts, and does not too much disturb the peace of the day with the stir of life and passion. The point in the Sunday readings and occupations is, to keep the heart at peace and the mind alive and receptive, open to any holy impression which may come from above, it may be in the fields or by the fireside. It is not that we are to be seeking, making efforts all day long, in church and out of it. We may rest altogether, in body and spirit; on condition that we do not become *engrossed*, that we keep ourselves open to the influences which fall in unexpected ways. This thought determines the choice of the Sunday story-book. Any pure, thoughtful study of character, earnest picture of life, will do to carry our thoughts upward, though the Divine Name be not mentioned; but tales full of affairs and adventures, or tales of passion, are hardly to be chosen.

It is unadvisable to put twaddling "goody-goody" story-books into the hands of the young people: a revulsion of taste will come, and then the weakness of this sort of literature will be laid to the charge of religion. Music in the family is the greatest help towards making Sunday pleasant; but here, again, it is, perhaps, well to avoid music which

carries associations of passion and unrest. There can, however, be little difficulty in making a suitable choice, when it is hardly too much to say that the greatest works of the greatest masters are consecrated to the service of religion.

"The liberal soul deviseth liberal things," is a safe rule once the principle is recognized, the purpose and meaning of the Sunday rest. I venture to enter so fully into this subject because the question of Sunday observances is one which comes up to be settled between the parents and every growing-up family.

#### *Home Culture—Books.*

Although any attempt at intellectual training must be abandoned by the parents when once their children have gone to school, intellectual *culture* is a different matter, and this the young people must get at home, or nowhere. By this sort of culture we mean, not so much the getting of knowledge, nor even getting the power to learn, but the cultivation of the power to appreciate, to enjoy, whatever is just, true, and beautiful in thought and expression. For instance, one man reads—

"... He lay along,

Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out  
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood;  
To the which place a poor sequester'd stag,  
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,  
Did come to languish;"—

and gets no more out of it than the four facts of the reclining man, the oak, the brook, and the wounded stag. Another reads, and gets these and something over—a delicious mental image, and a sense of exquisite pleasure in the *putting* of the thought, the mere ordering of the words. Now, the second has, other things being equal, a hundred-fold the means of happiness which the first enjoys; he has a sixth sense, a new

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inlet of pleasure, which adds enjoyment to every hour of his life. If people are to live in order to get rich, rather than to enjoy satisfaction in the living, they can do very well without intellectual culture; but if we are to make the most of life as the days go on, then it is a duty to put this power of getting enjoyment into the hands of the children.

They must be educated up to it. Some children, by right of descent, take to books as ducks to the water; but delight in a fine thought, well set, does not come by nature. Moreover, it is not the sort of thing that the training of the schools commonly aims at; to turn out men and women with enough exact knowledge for the occasions of life, and with wits on the alert for chances of promotion, that is what most schools pretend to, and, indeed, do accomplish. The contention of scholars is, that a classical education does more, turns out men with intellects cultivated *and* trained, awake to every refinement of thought, and ready for action. But the press and hurry of our times and the clamour for *useful* knowledge are driving classical culture out of the field; and parents will have to make up their minds, not only that they must supplement the moral training of the school, but must supply the intellectual culture, without which knowledge may be power, but is not pleasure, nor the means of pleasure.

There is little opportunity to give this culture to the boy taken up with his school and its interests; the more reason, therefore, to make the most of the little: for when the boy leaves school, he is in a measure set—his thoughts will not readily run in new channels. The business of the parent is to keep open right-of-way to the pleasant places provided for the jaded brain. Few things help more in this than a family habit of reading aloud. Even a dry book is readable when everybody listens, while a work of power and interest becomes delightful when eye meets eye at the telling bits. To read "The Newcomes" to yourself is like sitting down to a

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solitary feast of strawberries and cream; every page has that in it which demands to be shared.

There are few stronger family bonds than this habit of devoting an occasional hour to reading aloud, on winter evenings, at any rate. The practice is pleasant at the time, and pleasant in the retrospect: giving occasion for much bright talk, merry and wise, and quickening family affection by means of intellectual sympathy. Indeed, the wonder is that any family should neglect such a simple means of pure enjoyment, and of moral, as well as intellectual culture. But this, of reading aloud, is not a practice to be taken up and laid down at pleasure. Let the habit drop, and it is difficult to take it up again, because every one has, in the mean time, struck a vein of intellectual entertainment for himself—trashy stuff, it may be,—which makes him an unwilling listener to the family "book." No; let an hour's reading aloud be a part of the winter "evening at home"—on one or two evenings a week, at any rate—and everybody will look forward to it as a hungry boy looks for his dinner.

#### *The Art of Reading Aloud.*

If reading is to be pleasant to the listeners, the reading itself must be distinct, easy, and sympathetic. And here is something more which parents must do for their children themselves, for nobody else will get them into the habit of reading for the pleasure of other people from the moment when they can read fluently at all. After indistinct and careless enunciation, perhaps the two most trying faults in a reader are, the slowness which does not see what is coming next, and stumbles over the new clause, and the habit of gasping, like a fish out of water, several times in the course of a sentence.

The last fault is easy of cure: "Never breathe through the lips, but always through the nostrils in reading," is

a safe rule: if the lips be closed in the act of taking breath, enough air is inhaled to inflate the lungs, and supply "breath" to the reader; if an undue supply is taken in by mouth and nostrils both, the inconvenience is caused which relieves itself in gasps.

The stumbling reader spoils his book from sheer want of attention. He should train himself to look on, to be always a line in advance, so that he may be ready for what is coming. Faults in enunciation should be dealt with one by one. For instance, one week, the reader takes pains to secure the "d" in "and;" the other letters will take care of themselves, and the less they are heard, the better. Indeed, if the final consonants are secured, *d*, *t*, and *ng*, especially, the reading will be distinct and finished.

Another advantage of the family *lecture* is, that it enables parents to detect and correct provincialisms; and however anxious all may be, on historical grounds, to preserve *dialect*, few people desire to preserve it in the persons of their own children. For the rest, practice makes perfect. Let everybody take his night or his week for reading, with the certainty that the pleasure of the whole family depends on his reading well.

#### *The Book for the Evening Lecture.*

To attempt a list of books suitable for the family lecture would be as hopeless as it is unnecessary; but it is possible to discuss the principles on which the selection should be made. In the first place, to get information is *not* the object of the family reading, but to make the young people acquainted with the flavour of, to give them a *taste* for a real "*book*"—that is, roughly speaking, a work of so much literary merit, that it should be read and valued for the sake of that alone, whatever its subject-matter.

This rule makes a clean sweep of the literature to be

found in nine houses out of ten—twaddling story-books, funny or "good;" worthless novels; second-rate writing, whether in works of history or of general literature; compendiums, abstracts, short sketches of great lives, useful information in whatever form. None of these should be admitted to the evening lecture, and, indeed, the less they are *read* at all, the better. A good encyclopedia is an invaluable storehouse of facts, and should be made use of to elucidate every difficulty that occurs in general reading; and information got in this way, at the moment it is wanted, is remembered: but it is a mistake to *read* for information only.

Next, the book must be *interesting*; amusing or pathetic, as may be, but not too profound: the young people have been grinding all day, and now they want relaxation. One is sorry for girls and boys who do not hear the Waverley novels read at home; nothing afterwards can make up for the delight of growing up in the company of Peveril of the Peak, Meg Merrilies, Oldbuck, the Master of Ravenshoe, Caleb Balderstone, and the rest: and every page is a training in righteous living and gentlemanlike feeling. But novels are not the only resource; well-written books of travel are always charming; and, better than anything, good biographies of interesting people: not any of the single-volume series of "Eminent" persons, but a big two-volume book that gives you time to become at home with your man.

Important historical works had better be reserved for holiday reading, but historical and literary essays by *men of letters*, afford very delightful reading. There is no hurry. The evening reading is not task work. It is not important that many books should be read; but it is important that only good books should be read, and read with such ease and pleasant leisure that they become to the hearers so much mental property for life.

The introduction to a great author should be made a

matter of some ceremony. I do not know whether a first introduction to Ruskin, for instance, is the cause of such real emotion now as it was to intelligent young people of my generation; but the "Crown of Wild Olives" still, probably, marks a literary epoch for most young readers.

One other point: it is hopeless and unnecessary to attempt to keep up with current literature. Hereafter, it may be necessary to make some struggle to keep abreast of the new books as they pour from the press; but let the leisure of youth be spent upon "standard" authors, that have lived through, at least, twenty years of praise and blame.

*Poetry as a Means of Culture.*

Poetry takes first rank as a means of intellectual culture. Some one says that we ought to see a good picture, hear good music, and read some good poetry every day; and, certainly, a little poetry should form part of the evening lecture. "Collections" of poems are to be eschewed; but some one poet should have at least a year to himself, that he may have time to do what is in him towards cultivating the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the generous heart.

Scott, of course, here as before, opens the ball, if only for the chivalry, the youthful enthusiasm of his verse. Then there is always a stirring story in the poem, a recommendation to the young reader. Cowper, who does not tell many stories, is read with pleasure by boys and girls almost as soon as they begin to care for Scott; the careful, truthful word-painting of "The Task," unobscured by poetic fancies, appears to suit the matter-of-fact young mind. Then, it is pleasant to know poetry which there are frequent opportunities of verifying:—

"The cattle moura in corners  
Where the fence screens them:"—

who that takes winter walks in the country has not seen that? Goldsmith, and some others, take their places beside Cowper, to be read or not, as occasion offers. It is doubtful if Milton, sublime as he is, is so serviceable for the culture of the "unlearned and ignorant" as are some less distinguished poets; he gets out of reach, into regions of scholarship and fancy, where these fail to follow. But, of course, Milton must be duly read: the effort to follow his "high themes" is culture in itself. And yet "Christopher North" is right; good music and fine poetry need not be understood to be enjoyed.

"Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd  
Under the opening eye-lids of the morn,  
We drove a-field, and both together heard  
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,  
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
Oft till the star, that rose at evening bright,  
Toward heaven's descent had slop'd his westerling wheel."

The youth who carries about with him such melodious cadence will not readily be taken with tinsel. The epithets of "Lycidas" alone are an education of the poetic sense.

Many of us will feel that Wordsworth is the poet to read, and grow thereby. He, almost more than any other English poet of this century, has proved himself a power, and a power for good, making for whatever is true, pure, simple, humble, teachable; for what is *super-sensuous*, at any rate, if not spiritual.

The adventures of Una and her tardy, finally victorious knight afford great food for the imagination, lofty teaching, and fine culture of the poetic sense. It is a misfortune to grow up without having read and dreamt over the "Faerie Queen."

There is no space to glance at even the few poets, each of whom should have his share in the cultivation of the mind.

After the ploughing and harrowing, the *seed* will be received by a process of natural selection; this poet will draw disciples here, that elsewhere: but it is the part of parents to bring the minds of their children under the influence of the highest, purest poetic thought we have. As for Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and others of the "lords of language," it may be well to let them wait this same process of selection.

And Shakespeare? He, indeed, is not to be classed, and timed, and treated as one amongst others, ~~he, who~~ might well be the daily bread of the intellectual life; Shakespeare is not to be studied in a year; he is to be read continuously throughout life, from ten years old and upwards. But a child of ten cannot understand Shakespeare. No; but can a man of fifty? Is not our great poet rather an ample feast of which every one takes according to his needs, and leaves what he has no stomach for? A little girl of nine said to me the other day that she had only read one play of Shakespeare's through, and that that was "A Midsummer Night's Dream." She did not understand the play, of course, but she must have found enough to amuse and interest her. How would it be to have a monthly reading of Shakespeare—a play, to be read in character, and continued for two or three evenings until it is finished? The Shakespeare evenings would come to be looked on as a family *festa*; and the plays, read again and again, year after year, would yield more at each reading, and would leave behind in the end rich deposits of wisdom.

It is unnecessary to say a word about the great contemporary poets, Browning, Tennyson, and whoever else stands out from the crowd; each will secure his own following of young disciples from amongst those who have had the poetic taste developed; and to develop this appreciative power, rather than to direct its use, is the business of the parents.

So much for the evening readings, which will in them-

selves carry on the intellectual culture we have in view: given, the right book, family sympathy in the reading of it, and easy talk about it, and the rest will take care of itself.

The evening readings should be entertaining, and not of a kind to demand severe mental effort; but the long holidays are too long for mere intellectual dawdling. Every Christmas and summer vacation should be marked by the family reading of some great work of literary renown, whether of history, or, purely, of *belles lettres*. The daily reading and discussion of one such work will give meaning and coherence to the history "grind" of the school, will keep up a state of mental activity, and will add zest to the general play and leisure of the holidays.

Yet, be it confessed, that, in the matter of reading, this sort of spoon-feeding is not the best thing, after all. Far better would it be that the young people should seek out their own pastures, the parents doing no more than keep a judicious eye upon their roving. But, the fact is, young people are so taken up with living, that, as a rule, they do not read nowadays: and it is possible that a course of spoon-meat may help them over an era of feeble digestive powers, and put them in the way of finding their proper provender.

#### Table-talk.

The character of the family reading will affect that of the talk; but, considering how little parents see of young people once entered on their school career, it is worth while to say a few words of the table-talk which affords parents their best opportunity of influencing the opinions of the young. Every one is agreed that animated table-talk is a condition of health. No one excuses the churlish temper which allows a member of a family to sit down absorbed in his own reflections, and with hardly a word for his neighbours. But conversation at table is something more than a means of amusement

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and refreshment. The career of many a young person has turned upon some chance remark made at the home table. Do but watch the eagerness with which the young catch up every remark made by their elders on public affairs, books, men, and you will see they are really trying to construct a chart to steer by; they want to know what to do, it is true, but they also want to know what to *think* about everything.

Parents sometimes forget that it is their duty to give their children grounds for sound opinions upon many questions which concern us as human beings and as citizens; and then they are scandalized when the young folk air audacious views picked up from some advanced light of their own age and standing. But they *will* have views: the right to have and to hold an opinion is one of those points on which the youth makes a stand.

A few parents are unjust in this matter. It is not only the right, but the duty, of the growing intelligence to consider the facts that come before it, and to form conclusions; and the assumption that parents have a right to think *for* their children, and pass on their own views unmodified upon literature and art, manners and morals, is exceedingly trying to the young; the headstrong resent it openly, the easy-going avoid discussion, and take their own way. But, it is said, the young are in no condition to form sound opinions: they have neither the knowledge nor the experience which should guide them. That is true, and they know it, and hang on the lips of their elders for what may help them to adjust their views of life. Here is the opportunity of parents: the young people will not take ready-made opinions, therefore suppress yours; put the facts before them in the fairest, fullest light, and leave them to their own conclusions. The more you withhold your opinions, the more anxious they are to get at them. People are, for them, sharply divided into good and bad; actions are vicious or

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The Awkward Age.

Indeed this, of the growing boy or girl, is not only an awkward, but a critical stage of life. For the first time, the young people are greatly occupied with the notion of their own *rights*: their *duties* are nowhere. Not what they owe, but what is due to them, it is, that oppresses their minds. "It's a shame," "It's not fair," "It's too bad," are muttered in secret, when no one ventures to murmur aloud,—and this, with aggravating unreasonableness, and a "one-sidedness" which grown-up people can hardly understand. But this tiresome behaviour does not arise from any moral twist in the young people; they really have more right than reason on their side: their claims might often be yielded, if there were none but themselves to consider. What they want is, to have their eyes opened that they may see the rights of others as clearly as their own; and their reason cultivated, that they may have power to weigh the one against the other. This aggressiveness is not mere naughtiness. They must be met on their own ground. Care must be taken not to offend their exaggerated sense of justice as to all that affects themselves. They must get the immunities they can fairly claim; and their parents must be at the trouble to convince them, with good humour, when they are clearly in the wrong.

In the mean time the state of feeling must be dealt with which would lead a boy to say, "I shan't," if he dared. He must be reached through his affections: the very feelings which make him offensive when centred upon himself, are beautiful and virtuous when they flow in the channels of justice and benevolence towards others. And this is a change not only possible, but easy and pleasant for parents to bring about. The feelings are there already; the strong sense of justice; and the love, which has become exaggerated self-love

*non* only because the *attention* has been allowed to *fix* upon self and its claims to the exclusion of others. It rests with the *non* parent to ~~draw~~ the attention from self to other people, and the affections will flow in that direction to which the attention is turned.

For instance, let the young people feel that the *happiness* of home is a trust which every member of it has in charge; that the child who sits down to table with a sullen face destroys for the time the happiness of his whole family, just as a hand's-breadth held close to the eyes will shut out the whole light of the sun. What is it that makes the happiness of every day; great treats, great successes, great delights? No, but constant friendly looks and tones in those about us, their interest and help in our pursuits, their service and pity when we are in difficulty and trouble. No home can be happy if a single member of it allow himself in ugly tempers and behaviour. By degrees, great sensitiveness to the moral atmosphere of the home will be acquired; the happiness of a single day will come to be regarded as a costly vase which any clumsy touch may overthrow. Now, the attention is taken off self and its claims, and fixed upon brother and sister, father and mother, servants and neighbours; so slight a thing as a friendly look can add to the *happiness* of every one of these.

Affection flows naturally towards those to whom we can give happiness. A boy who feels himself of little account in his family will give all his heart to his dog; he is necessary to Puck's happiness at any rate; and, as for the dog,—“I think it is wrong to let children have dogs. It spoils them for mankind,” says the late Lord Lytton. Let the boy have his dog, but let him know, to how many others even a pleasant word from him gives happiness for the moment. Benevolence, the delight in giving happiness, is a stream which swells as it flows. The boy who finds he really can make a difference

to his home, is on the look-out for chances. A hint as to what father or sister would like is not thrown away. Considerate obliging behaviour is no hardship to him when he is not “bothered” into it, but produces it of his own free will. Like begets like. The kindliness he shows is returned to him, and, by him, returned again, full measure, pressed down, and running over. He looks, not on his own things, but on the things of others. His love of justice shows in the demand of “fair play” for others now: he will not hear others spoken ill of in their absence, will not assign unworthy motives, or accuse another easily of unworthy conduct; he is just to the conduct, the character, the reputation of others. He puts himself involuntarily in the place of the other, and judges as he would be judged.

“Teach me to feel another's woe,  
To hide the faults I see;  
That mercy I to others show,  
That mercy show to me,”—

is his unformed, unconscious prayer.

His benevolence, again, his kindness, will reach, not only to the distresses of others, but will show itself in forbearance towards tiresome tempers, in magnanimity in the forgiveness of injuries. His habits of kind and friendly behaviour will, by degrees, develop into principles of action; until, at last, his character is established, and he comes to be known as a just and virtuous man. Towards this great result, the parents can do little more than keep the channels open, and direct the streams; draw the attention of their son to the needs and the claims of others, and point out to him from time to time the ways in which he holds the happiness of others in his hands. It is needless to say how a selfish or worldly maxim thrown in—“Take care of yourself,” “Look after your own interests,” “Give tit for tat,”—may obstruct the channel or choke the spring. Does, then, the whole of moral training

resolve itself into the culture of the affections? Even so; it is no new thing to us to learn that—

“As every rainbow hue is light,  
So every grace is love.”

### 9. Home Training—Religious.

With regard to the training of the young in the religious life, I am chiefly anxious to call your attention to the power and beauty of a holy youth. We are content, in this matter, with too low a standard for the children as for ourselves, looking for less than that which many a beautiful child attains in his degree—a life, “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners:”—

“Who aimeth at a star,  
Shoots higher, far,

Than he who means a tree”

As for the few practical hints I shall venture to offer, they are in this, as in other matters of education, only what thoughtful mothers already carry out.

In the first place, “every word of God” is the food of the spiritual life; and these words come to us most freely in the moments we set apart in which to recollect ourselves, read, say our prayers. Such moments in the lives of young people are apt to be furtive and hurried; it is well to secure for them the necessary leisure—a quiet twenty minutes, say,—and that, early in the evening; for the fag end of the day is not the best time for its most serious affairs. I have known happy results where it is the habit of the young people to retire for a little while, when their wits are fresh, and before the work or play of the evening has begun.

Again, the Christian life should be a *progressive* life. The boy should not be allowed to feel himself like a door on its hinges, always swinging over the same ground. New and

definite aims, thoughts, subjects of prayer, should be set before him week by week, that “something attempted, something done,” may give him courage; and that, suppose he is harassed by failure, he may try in a new direction with new hope. Even those who do not belong to the Church of England would find her Sunday collects, epistles, and gospels helpful, as giving the young people something definite to think about, week by week. We can hardly hope in this life to grow up to all there is in those weekly portions, but the youngest Christian finds enough to go on with, and has the reposing sense of being led, step by step, in his heavenward progress. I am not suggesting this as a substitute for wider reading of the Bible, only as a definite thought, purpose, and prayer for every week as it comes, in addition to whatever other prayers general or special needs may call for. The bringing of the thought of the collect and its accompanying scriptures home will afford occasion for a few earnest words, week by week, not to be readily forgotten. And this in itself is a gain, for we all experience some difficulty in speaking of the best things to the people we live amongst, especially to the young people.

Only one point more—a word as to the manner of keeping Sunday in the family. Do not let the young people feel themselves straitened by narrow views: give them freely the broad principle that what is right on Saturday is right on Sunday—right, but not in all things convenient; the Sunday has pursuits of its own; and we are no more willing to give up any part of it to the grind of the common business or the common pleasures of life, than the schoolboy is to give up a holiday to the grind of school-work. Even for selfish reasons of health and comfort, we cannot afford to give up the repose to body, mind, and spirit which we owe to the change of thought and occupations the day brings.

Having made the principle of Sunday-keeping plain,

make the practice pleasant. Let it be a joyous day—everybody in his best temper and gentlest manners. Put anxious cares aside on Sunday, for the children's sakes; and if there be no "vain deluding mirth," let there be gaiety of heart and talk.

Let the day be full of its own special interests and amusements. An hour's reading aloud, from Sunday to Sunday, of a work of real power or interest, might add to the interest of Sunday afternoon; and this family reading should supply a pleasant *intellectual* stimulus.

A little poetry may well be got in; there is time to digest it on Sunday; not only George Herbert, Vaughan, Keble, but any poet who feeds the heart with wise thoughts, and does not too much disturb the peace of the day with the stir of life and passion. The point in the Sunday readings and occupations is, to keep the heart at peace and the mind alive and receptive, open to any holy impression which may come from above, it may be in the fields or by the fireside. It is not that we are to be seeking, making efforts all day long, in church and out of it. We may rest altogether, in body and spirit; on condition that we do not become *engrossed*, that we keep ourselves open to the influences which fall in unexpected ways. This thought determines the choice of the Sunday story-book. Any pure, thoughtful study of character, earnest picture of life, will do to carry our thoughts upward, though the Divine Name be not mentioned; but tales full of affairs and adventures, or tales of passion, are hardly to be chosen.

It is unadvisable to put twaddling "goody-goody" story-books into the hands of the young people: a revulsion of taste will come, and then the weakness of this sort of literature will be laid to the charge of religion. Music in the family is the greatest help towards making Sunday pleasant; but here, again, it is, perhaps, well to avoid music which

carries associations of passion and unrest. There can, however, be little difficulty in making a suitable choice, when it is hardly too much to say that the greatest works of the greatest masters are consecrated to the service of religion.

"The liberal soul deviseth liberal things," is a safe rule once the principle is recognized, the purpose and meaning of the Sunday rest. I venture to enter so fully into this subject because the question of Sunday observances is one which comes up to be settled between the parents and every growing-up family.

#### *Home Culture—Books.*

Although any attempt at intellectual training must be abandoned by the parents when once their children have gone to school, intellectual *culture* is a different matter, and this the young people must get at home, or nowhere. By this sort of culture we mean, not so much the getting of knowledge, nor even getting the power to learn, but the cultivation of the power to appreciate, to enjoy, whatever is just, true, and beautiful in thought and expression. For instance, one man reads—

"... He lay along,

Under an oak, whose antique root peeps out  
Upon the brook that brawls along this wood;  
To the which place a poor sequester'd stag,  
That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,  
Did come to languish;"—

and gets no more out of it than the four facts of the reclining man, the oak, the brook, and the wounded stag. Another reads, and gets these and something over—a delicious mental image, and a sense of exquisite pleasure in the *putting* of the thought, the mere ordering of the words. Now, the second has, other things being equal, a hundred-fold the means of happiness which the first enjoys; he has a sixth sense, a new

inlet of pleasure, which adds enjoyment to every hour of his life. If people are to live in order to get rich, rather than to enjoy satisfaction in the living, they can do very well without intellectual culture; but if we are to make the most of life as the days go on, then it is a duty to put this power of getting enjoyment into the hands of the children.

They must be educated up to it. Some children, by right of descent, take to books as ducks to the water; but delight in a fine thought, well set, does not come by nature. Moreover, it is not the sort of thing that the training of the schools commonly aims at; to turn out men and women with enough exact knowledge for the occasions of life, and with wits on the alert for chances of promotion, that is what most schools pretend to, and, indeed, do accomplish. The contention of scholars is, that a classical education does more, turns out men with intellects cultivated *and* trained, awake to every refinement of thought, and ready for action. But the press and hurry of our times and the clamour for *useful* knowledge are driving classical culture out of the field; and parents will have to make up their minds, not only that they must supplement the moral training of the school, but must supply the intellectual culture, without which knowledge may be power, but is not pleasure, nor the means of pleasure.

There is little opportunity to give this culture to the boy taken up with his school and its interests; the more reason, therefore, to make the most of the little: for when the boy leaves school, he is in a measure set—his thoughts will not readily run in new channels. The business of the parent is to keep open right-of-way to the pleasant places provided for the jaded brain. Few things help more in this than a family habit of reading aloud. Even a dry book is readable when everybody listens, while a work of power and interest becomes delightful when eye meets eye at the telling bits. To read "The Newcomes" to yourself is like sitting down to a

solitary feast of strawberries and cream; every page has that in it which demands to be shared.

There are few stronger family bonds than this habit of devoting an occasional hour to reading aloud, on winter evenings, at any rate. The practice is pleasant at the time, and pleasant in the retrospect: giving occasion for much bright talk, merry and wise, and quickening family affection by means of intellectual sympathy. Indeed, the wonder is that any family should neglect such a simple means of pure enjoyment, and of moral, as well as intellectual culture. But this, of reading aloud, is not a practice to be taken up and laid down at pleasure. Let the habit drop, and it is difficult to take it up again, because every one has, in the mean time, struck a vein of intellectual entertainment for himself—trashy stuff, it may be,—which makes him an unwilling listener to the family "book." No; let an hour's reading aloud be a part of the winter "evening at home"—on one or two evenings a week, at any rate—and everybody will look forward to it as a hungry boy looks for his dinner.

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The last fault is easy of cure: "Never breathe through the lips, but always through the nostrils in reading," is

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The stumbling reader spoils his book from sheer want of attention. He should train himself to look on, to be always a line in advance, so that he may be ready for what is coming. Faults in enunciation should be dealt with one by one. For instance, one week, the reader takes pains to secure the "d" in "and;" the other letters will take care of themselves, and the less they are heard, the better. Indeed, if the final consonants are secured, *d*, *t*, and *ng*, especially, the reading will be distinct and finished.

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7 Important historical works had better be reserved for holiday reading, but historical and literary essays by *men of letters* afford very delightful reading. There is no hurry. The evening reading is not task work. It is not important that many books should be read; but it is important that only good books should be read, and read with such ease and pleasant leisure that they become to the hearers so much mental property for life.

The introduction to a great author should be made a

matter of some ceremony. I do not know whether a first introduction to Ruskin, for instance, is the cause of such real emotion now as it was to intelligent young people of my generation; but the "Crown of Wild Olives" still, probably, marks a literary epoch for most young readers.

One other point: it is hopeless and unnecessary to attempt to keep up with current literature. Hereafter, it may be necessary to make some struggle to keep abreast of the new books as they pour from the press; but let the leisure of youth be spent upon "standard" authors, that have lived through, at least, twenty years of praise and blame.

*Poetry as a Means of Culture.*

Poetry takes first rank as a means of intellectual culture. Some one says that we ought to see a good picture, hear good music, and read some good poetry every day; and, certainly, a little poetry should form part of the evening lecture. "Collections" of poems are to be eschewed; but some one poet should have at least a year to himself, that he may have time to do what is in him towards cultivating the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the generous heart.

Scott, of course, here as before, opens the ball, if only for the chivalry, the youthful enthusiasm of his verse. Then there is always a stirring story in the poem, a recommendation to the young reader. Cowper, who does not tell many stories, is read with pleasure by boys and girls almost as soon as they begin to care for Scott; the careful, truthful word-painting of "The Task," unobscured by poetic fancies, appears to suit the matter-of-fact young mind. Then, it is pleasant to know poetry which there are frequent opportunities of verifying:—

of "The cattle mourn in corners  
Where the fence screens them:—"  
Now from the road or from the  
neighbouring pale,  
Come croaking as the housewife's well-known  
call  
The feathered tribes domestic:—

who that ~~takes~~ winter walks in the country has not seen that? Goldsmith, and some others, take their places beside Cowper, to be read or not, as occasion offers. It is doubtful if Milton, sublime as he is, is so serviceable for the culture of the "unlearned and ignorant" as are some less distinguished poets; he gets out of reach, into regions of scholarship and fancy, where these fail to follow. ~~But, of course,~~ Milton *nevertheless* must be duly read: the effort to follow his "high themes" is culture in itself. And yet "Christopher North" is right; good music and fine poetry need not be understood to be enjoyed.

—: /  
"Together both, ere the high lawns appear'd  
Under the opening eye-lids of the morn,  
We drove a-field, and both together heard  
What time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn,  
Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
Oft till the star, that rose at evening bright,  
Toward heaven's descent had sloped his westerling wheel." *d/*

The youth who carries about with him such melodious cadence will not readily be taken with tinsel. The epithets of "Lycidas" alone are an education of the poetic sense. *from.*

Many of us will feel that Wordsworth is the poet to read, and grow thereby. He, almost more than any other English poet of ~~this~~ century, has proved himself a power, and a power for good, making for whatever is true, pure, simple, ~~humble~~, teachable; for what is *super-sensuous*, at any rate, if not spiritual. *9*

The adventures of Una and her tardy, finally victorious knight afford great food for the imagination, lofty teaching, and fine culture of the poetic sense. It is a misfortune to grow up without having read and dreamt over the "Faerie Queen."

There is no space to glance at even the few poets, each of whom should have his share in the cultivation of the mind. *1 work of 1 ng*

After the ploughing and harrowing, the seed will be ~~received~~ <sup>appropriately</sup> by a process of natural selection; this poet will draw disciples here, that/elsewhere: but it is the part of parents to bring the minds of their children under the influence of the highest, purest poetic thought we have. As for Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and others of the "lords of language," it may be well to let them wait this same process of selection.

And Shakespeare? He, indeed, is not to be classed, and timed, and treated as one amongst others, <sup>he, +</sup> who might well be the daily bread of the intellectual life; Shakespeare is not to be studied in a year; he is to be read continuously throughout life, from ten years old and <sup>on</sup> upwards. But a child of ten cannot understand Shakespeare. No; but can a man of fifty? Is not our great poet rather an ample feast of which every one takes according to his needs, and leaves what he has no stomach for? A little girl of nine said to me the other day that she had only read one play of Shakespeare's through, and ~~that~~ that was "A Midsummer Night's Dream." She did not understand the play, of course, but she must have found enough to amuse and interest her. How would it be to have a monthly reading of Shakespeare—a play, to be read in character, and continued for two or three evenings until it is finished? The Shakespeare evenings would come to be looked on as a family *festa*; and the plays, read again and again, year after year, would yield more at each reading, and would leave behind in the end rich deposits of wisdom.

It is unnecessary to say a word about the great contemporary poets, Browning, Tennyson, and whoever else stands out from the crowd; each will secure his own following of young disciples from amongst those who have had the poetic taste developed; and to develop this appreciative power, rather than to direct its use, is the business of the parents.

So much for the evening readings, which will in them-

selves carry on the intellectual culture we have in view: given, the right book, family sympathy in the reading of it, and easy talk about it, and the rest will take care of itself.

The evening readings should be entertaining, and not of a kind to demand severe mental effort; but the long holidays are too long for mere intellectual dawdling. Every Christmas and summer vacation should be marked by the family reading of some great work of literary renown, whether of history, or, purely, of *belles lettres*. The daily reading and discussion of one such work will give meaning and coherence to the history "grind" of the school, will keep up a state of mental activity, and will add zest to the general play and leisure of the holidays.

Yet, be it confessed, that, in the matter of reading, this sort of spoon-feeding is not the best thing, after all. Far better would it be that the young people should seek out their own pastures, the parents doing no more than keep a judicious eye upon their roving. But, the fact is, young people are so taken up with living, that, as a rule, they do not read nowadays: and it is possible that a course of spoon-meat may help them over an era of feeble digestive powers, and put them in the way of finding their proper ~~provender~~ <sup>intellectual</sup> <sup>nourishment</sup>.

#### Table-talk.

The character of the family reading will affect that of the talk; but, considering how little parents see of young people once entered on their school career, it is worth while to say a few words of the table-talk which affords parents their best opportunity of influencing the opinions of the young. Every one is agreed that animated table-talk is a condition of health. No one excuses the churlish temper which allows a member of a family to sit down absorbed in his own reflections, and with hardly a word for his neighbours. But conversation at table is something more than a means of amusement

and refreshment. The career of many a young person has turned upon some chance remark made at the home table. Do but watch the eagerness with which the young catch up every remark made by their elders on public affairs, books, men, and you will see they are really trying to construct a chart to steer by; they want to know what to do, it is true, but they also want to know what to *think* about everything.

Parents sometimes forget that it is their duty to give their children grounds for sound opinions upon many questions which concern us as human beings and as citizens; and then they are scandalized when the young folk air audacious views picked up from some advanced light of their own age and standing. But they *will* have views: the right to have and to hold an opinion is one of those points on which the youth makes a stand.

A few parents are unjust in this matter. It is not only the right, but the duty, of the growing intelligence to consider the facts that come before it, and to form conclusions; and the assumption that parents have a right to think *for* their children, and pass on their own views unmodified upon literature and art, manners and morals, is exceedingly trying to the young; the headstrong resent it openly, the easy-going avoid discussion, and take their own way. But, it is said, the young are in no condition to form sound opinions: they have neither the knowledge nor the experience which should guide them. That is true, and they know it, and hang on the lips of their elders for what may help them to adjust their views of life. Here is the opportunity of parents: the young people will not take ready-made opinions, therefore suppress yours; put the facts before them in the fairest, fullest light, and leave them to their own conclusions. The more you withhold your opinions, the more anxious they are to get at them. People are, for them, sharply divided into good and bad; actions are vicious or